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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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21 November 1966

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

Heavy fighting was reported on 20-21 November between North Vietnamese and US forces in the highlands of Pleiku Province near the Cambodian border.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Heavy fighting was reported on 20-21 November between battalion-strength North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars and platoon-sized elements of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division participating in Operation PAUL REVERE IV in the western highlands of Pleiku Province (Para. 1). The Viet Cong are reportedly amalgamating guerrilla units in Phu Cat District, Binh Dinh Province, apparently for the purpose of offsetting losses suffered during Operation IRVING (Paras. 2-3).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: A Constituent Assembly committee has proposed to the Directorate that it make seven amendments to the assembly's founding decree (Paras. 1-2).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Heavy fighting has again flared between Communist regulars and elements of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division conducting Operation PAUL REVERE IV in the western highlands of Pleiku Province. An estimated North Vietnamese Army (NVA) battalion on 20 November attacked and attempted to overrun the field position of a US infantry platoon deployed near the northern fringe of the Ia Drang Valley, some 35 miles southwest of Pleiku city. After nearly nine hours of sustained contact, the enemy force withdrew, leaving behind 102 killed. US losses totaled 30 killed, 13 wounded, and four missing. The US ground force was supported throughout the engagement by tactical air strikes, rocket-firing helicopters, and artillery bombardment.

Guerrillas in Binh Dinh Province

2. A recent report from Phu Cat District, Binh Dinh Province, and supporting evidence from captured documents indicate that the Viet Cong in the district are having problems with manpower and motivation in their village guerrilla units. The district's military section reportedly issued a directive recently to all subordinate villages ordering them to report the number of guerrillas in each village, so a plan could be drawn up to form joint village units. The guerrilla units of two villages were to be combined in order to "unify tactics and strategy." Since village units of Phu Cat suffered heavy casualties in the recent Operation IRVING, the formation of joint units probably represents an attempt to utilize the survivors more effectively.

3. Captured documents written before IRVING had indicated that the guerrilla movement in Phu Cat "lacked depth" because of poor motivation and improper ideological indoctrination, that guerrilla actions had been too limited, and that the fighting skills of guerrilla troops needed improvement. The documents' assessment apparently was correct; during IRVING, the guerrillas' performance was poor, and hundreds of them surrendered.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Constituent Assembly's 12-man "amendment" committee submitted a list of seven proposed changes in the assembly's founding decree law during a meeting with the Directorate on 18 November. The assembly's proposed changes in Article 20 of the decree would take away the government's right to make revisions in the constitution, and would require the chief of state to promulgate the constitution as received within 30 days. The proposed change in Article 21 would grant the assembly, after promulgation of the constitution, a voice in decision-making along with the Directorate until such time as a national assembly is elected. The Constituent Assembly is to be dissolved after the constitution becomes effective under existing Article 21.

2. Since the proposed changes would eliminate the government's veto power and require the Directorate to submit its amendments prior to the assembly's final vote on the constitution, it is doubtful that the GVN will accept the committee's proposals, according to the US Embassy. Chief of State Thieu is studying the proposed amendments and will reportedly have a reply for the assembly in two weeks. Negotiations between the government and the assembly over the government's role in the drafting of the constitution have been informal and conciliatory. Sources in the assembly are optimistic that a compromise will be worked out.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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